

EXHIBIT 2  
DATE 3-3-09  
HB 498

House Bill 498  
March 3, 2009  
Presented by Ken McDonald  
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

HB 498 increases the amount of upland game bird license dollars that would be earmarked specifically for the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program. While we are very appreciative of Rep. French's support for this program, and the intent of this bill, FWP is opposed to this bill at this time.

This Committee recently unanimously endorsed HB 499, which includes direction to FWP to develop a strategic plan for the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program, including quantifiable goals and objectives. A soon-to-be-completed Legislative Audit will make a similar recommendation. HB 499 also establishes a 12-person Citizens Advisory Committee to assist with development of that strategic plan. We believe this bill (HB498) is premature, especially without completion of the strategic plan that identifies goals, objectives, and associated costs. Once the strategic plan is completed, FWP will have a better understanding of resource needs. Until then, we suggest this bill is not necessary.

Increasing the earmark specifically for the upland game bird enhancement program impacts the general license fund, which is used to pay for all FWP expenses. It therefore limits the ability of FWP to direct funds toward other priorities that might be just as or more important.

FWP is charged with managing and conserving all fish and wildlife species. Earmarking funds for specific species or suites of species based on sales of licenses to hunt those species creates a "species must pay for themselves" approach to wildlife management. FWP is wary of exercising this approach too frequently as it ultimately limits FWP's ability to manage for all species - including ones that are important to the state but don't necessarily pay for themselves.

If after the strategic plan is completed and if it is determined that additional resources are needed and are a priority, FWP could request that additional dollars be allocated for implementation of the program - either through the budget process, utilizing general license funds, or through a bill such as this.

Again, we appreciate Rep. French's support of the Upland Game Bird Enhancement program. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.